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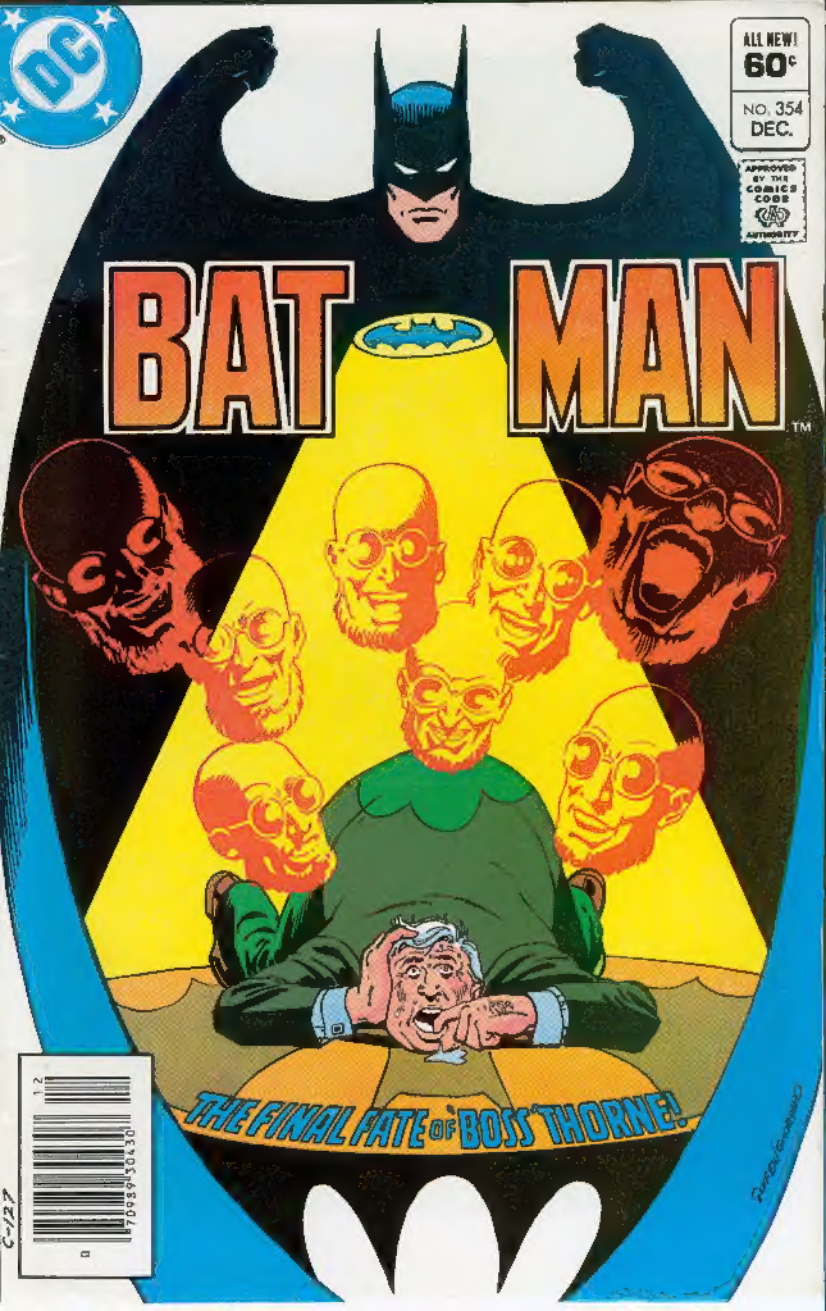
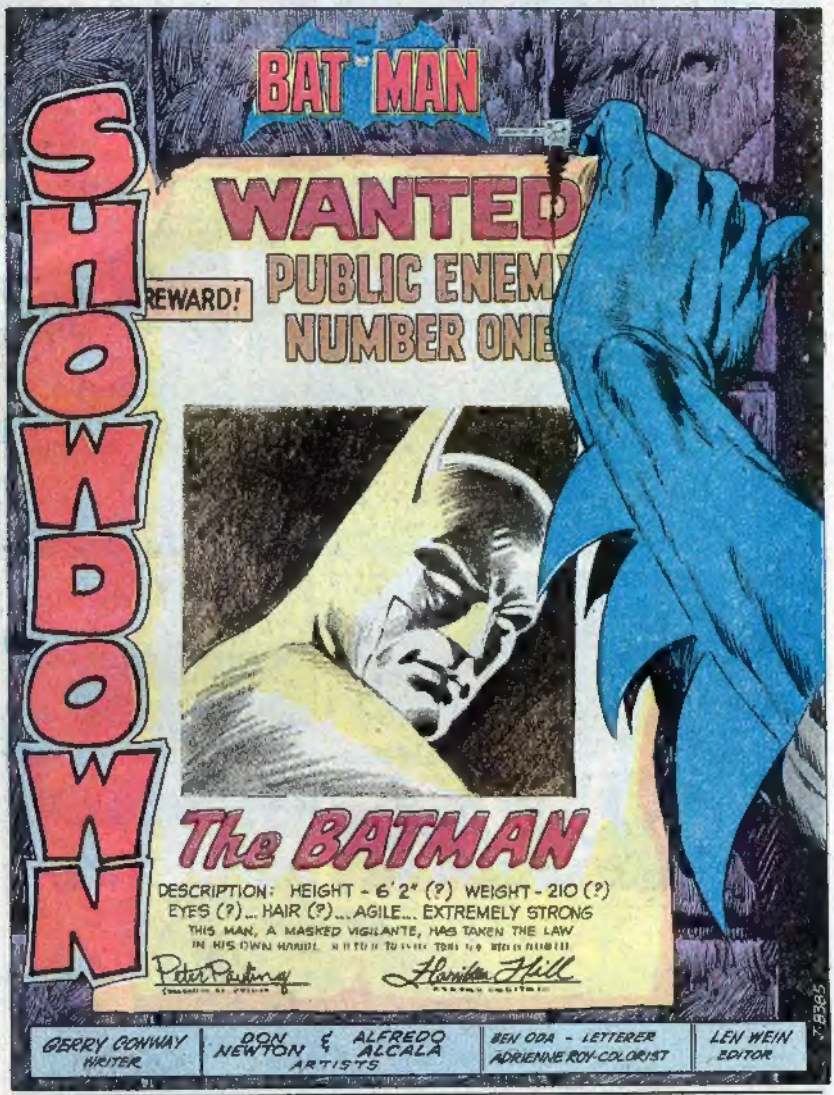

DC
ALL NEW!
60¢
NO. 354
DEC.
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
BATMAN
THE FINAL FATE OF 'BOSS' THORNE!



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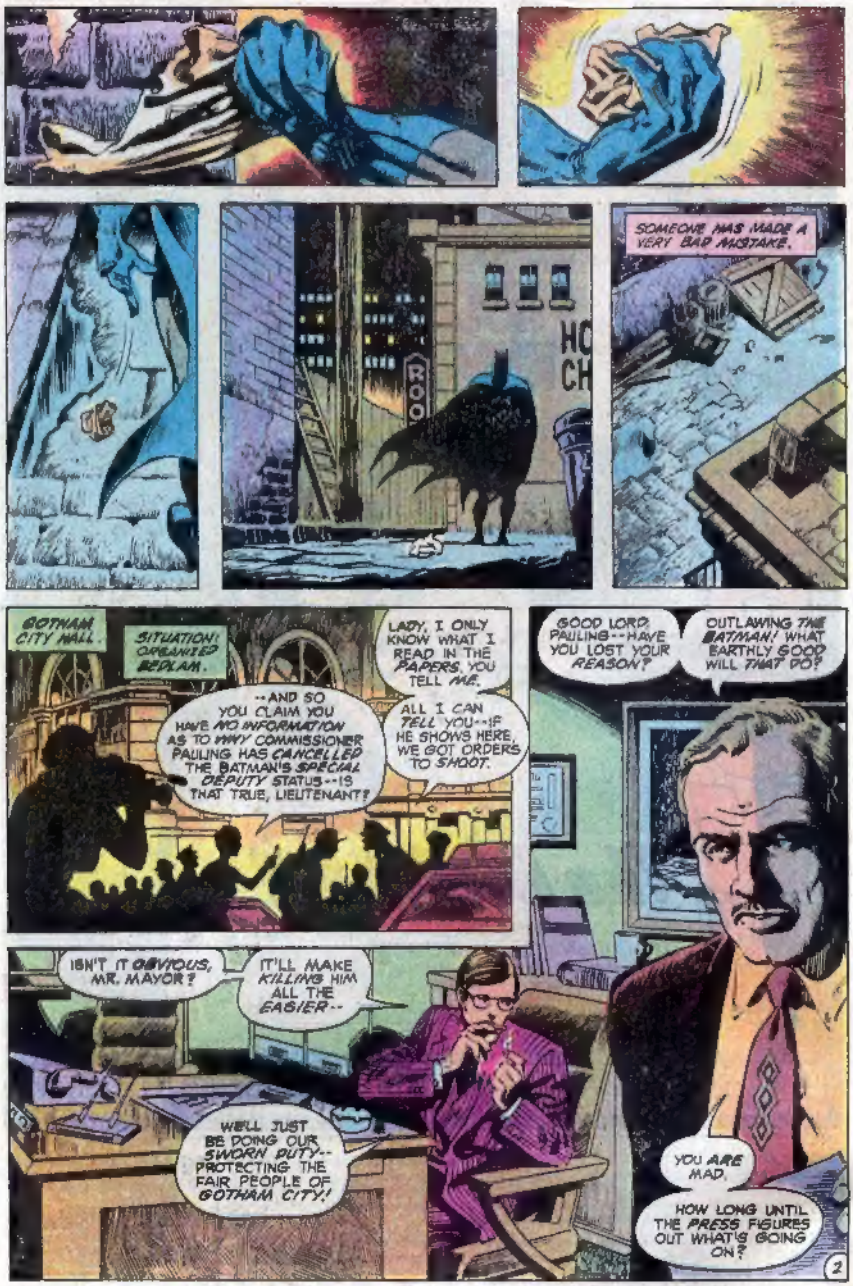

SOMEONE HAS MADE A VERY BAD MISTAKE.
GOTHAM CITY HALL.
SITUATION: ORGANIZED BEDLAM.
--AND SO YOU CLAIM YOU HAVE NO INFORMATION AS TO WHY COMMISSIONER PAULING HAS CANCELLED THE BATMAN'S SPECIAL DEPUTY STATUS--IS THAT TRUE, LIEUTENANT?
LADY, I ONLY KNOW WHAT I READ IN THE PAPERS. YOU TELL ME.
ALL I CAN TELL YOU--IF HE SHOWS HERE, WE GOT ORDERS TO SHOOT.
GOOD LORD, PAULING--HAVE YOU LOST YOUR REASON?
OUTLAWING THE BATMAN! WHAT EARTHLY GOOD WILL THAT DO?
ISN'T IT OBVIOUS, MR. MAYOR?
IT'LL MAKE KILLING HIM ALL THE EASIER--
WE'LL JUST BE DOING OUR SWORN DUTY--PROTECTING THE FAIR PEOPLE OF GOTHAM CITY!
YOU ARE MAD.
HOW LONG UNTIL THE PRESS FIGURES OUT WHAT'S GOING ON?
2

FORGET THE PRESS.
THEY'LL BELIEVE WHAT WE TELL THEM--
THAT THE BATMAN IS PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE?
WANTED
PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE
BATMAN
THEY'LL ASK QUESTIONS--QUESTIONS ABOUT THAT BREAK-OUT AT STATE PRISON--QUESTIONS WE CAN'T ANSWER!
TEMPER, TEMPER--EH?
WHERE'D THAT BREEZE COME FROM?
AN EAST WIND'S BLOWING, GENTLEMEN.
IT'S GOING TO BLOW YOU AWAY LIKE SO MUCH RUBBISH.
THE BATMAN!
HE'LL KILL US--
HANDS OFF THAT ALARM BUTTON, MR. MAYOR.
SMACK
YOU'VE BEEN GULLED BY YOUR OWN PROPAGANDA.
THE BATMAN DOESN'T KILL--
--BUT I'M GOING TO DESTROY YOU, ALL THE SAME.
FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO BOTH JAMES GORDON--AND GOTHAM CITY!
KEEP BACK--!
3

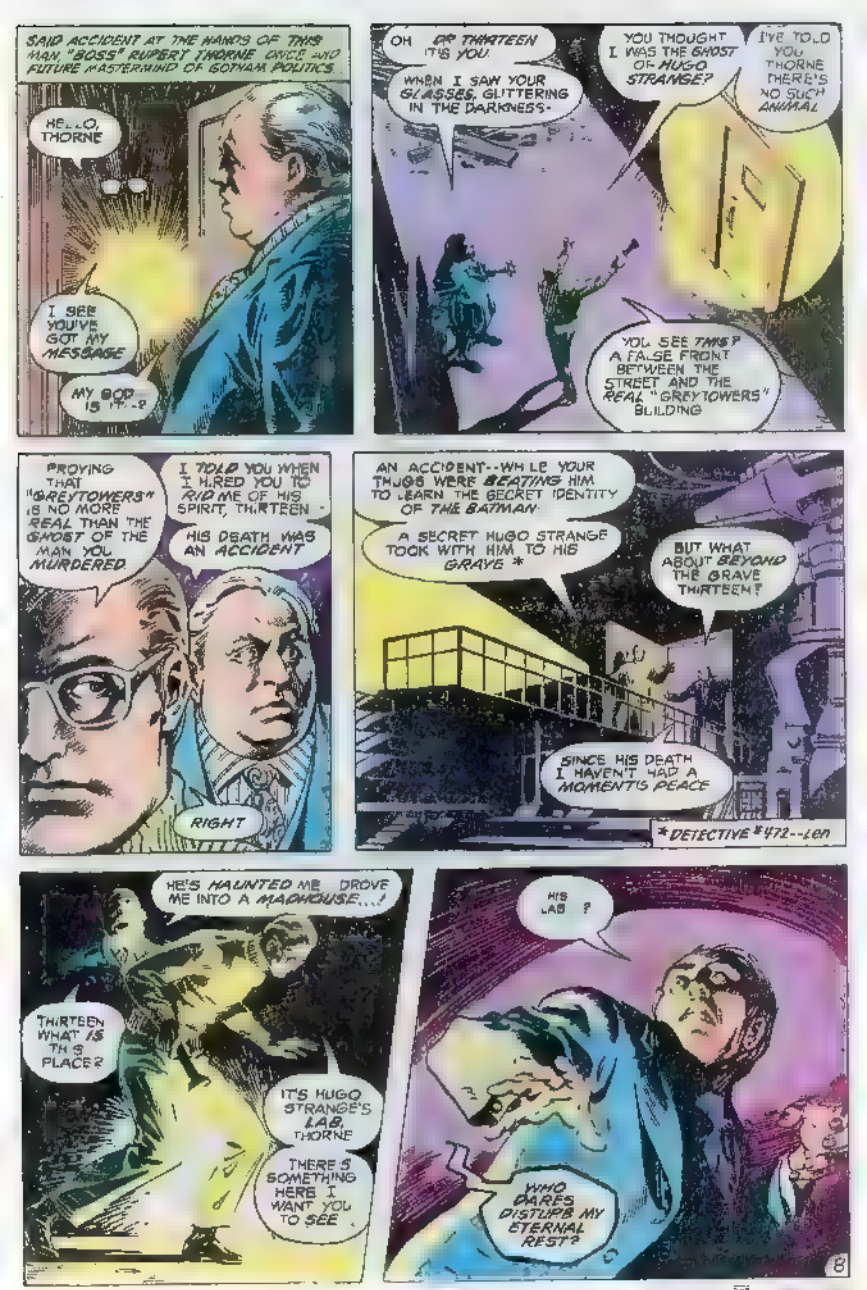
YOU DON'T REALLY THINK I'M AFRAID OF THAT GUN, DO YOU?
I-I'LL SHOOT--!
GO AHEAD!
THEN YOU'D BE RID OF ME.
BUT YOU WON'T.
IF YOU REALLY HAD THE GUTS TO PULL THAT TRIGGER--
--YOU AND "BOSS" THORNE WOULD NEVER HAVE HIRED DEADSHOT TO KILL ME.*
*AS REVEALED LAST ISSUE. --LEN.
YOU'RE AN OUTLAW-- YOU ENGINEERED A PRISON-BREAK--!
I-I'D BE PERFECTLY JUSTIFIED--
--JUSTIFIED--
PAULING... YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LET HIM GET AWAY...?
YOU SAID YOURSELF -- HE HELPED A CONVICT ESCAPE STATE PRISON--!
BUT NOT JUST ANY CONVICT, EH, PAULING?
DEADSHOT-- THE MAN YOU PLANNED TO ASSASSINATE TO REMOVE ANY PROOF OF YOUR CORRUPTION!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
THINK ABOUT IT.
I'LL BE BACK.
AND NEXT TIME, I MIGHT BRING A FRIEND.
THE MAN HAS GOT TO DIE!
BEEP!

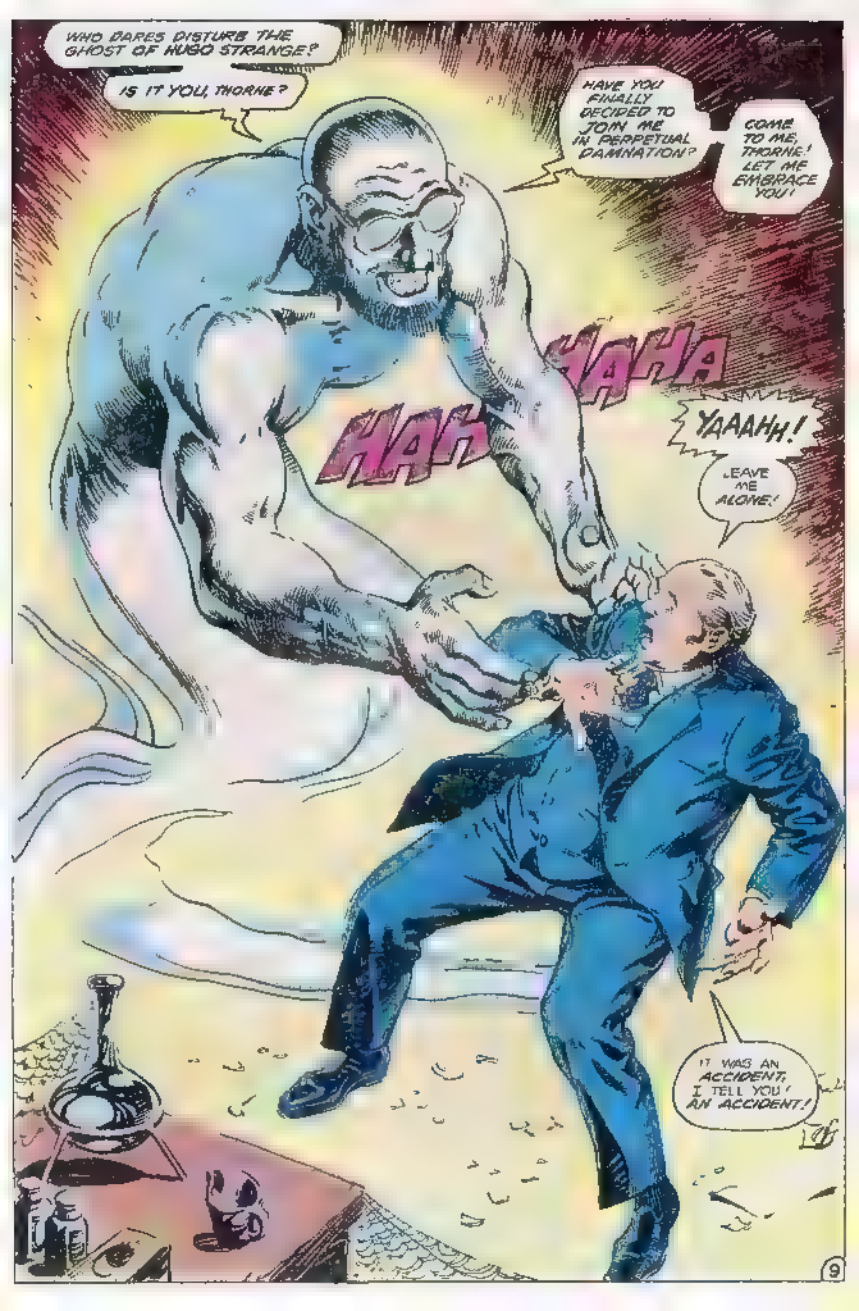
CONTINUED ON 5 ▼ BACK TO BASICS

I MISJUDGED PAULING.
I WAS SURE HE WOULDN'T HAVE THE NERVE TO HIT THE ALARM--
--THAT HE'D BE TOO WORRIED, WONDERING WHERE I'VE HIDDEN DEADSHOT.
DING DING DING
HE KNOWS DEADSHOT'S TESTIMONY COULD SEND ALL OF THEM TO PRISON FOR CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT MURDER.
HE DOESN'T KNOW THAT SO FAR DEADSHOT REFUSES TO COOPERATE!
DING DING DING
MY PLAN WAS TO SPOOK HILL, PAULING, AND THORNE INTO REVEALING THEIR COMPLICITY UNWITTINGLY.
INSTEAD, ALL I'VE MANAGED TO DO IS MAKE MYSELF A TARGET!
HOLD YOUR FIRE!
I DON'T CARE WHAT THE NEW COMMISSIONER SAYS--
--NOBODY'S SHOOTING AT THE BATMAN WITHOUT FIRST GIVING HIM A CHANCE TO SURRENDER!
THE HELL--!
GIMMIE THAT RIFLE, MISTER--!
BUT SERGEANT MCCLOSKY-- YOU HEARD THE LIEUTENANT--!
YEAH, AND WHEN THE COMMISH HEARS, THAT JOKER'S KEISTER IS GONNA BE READ MEAT!
GEEZ, THIS IS MORE FUN THAN PLOTZIN' DUCKS IN A CONEY ISLAND SHOOTIN' GALLERY!
POW
POW POW
6

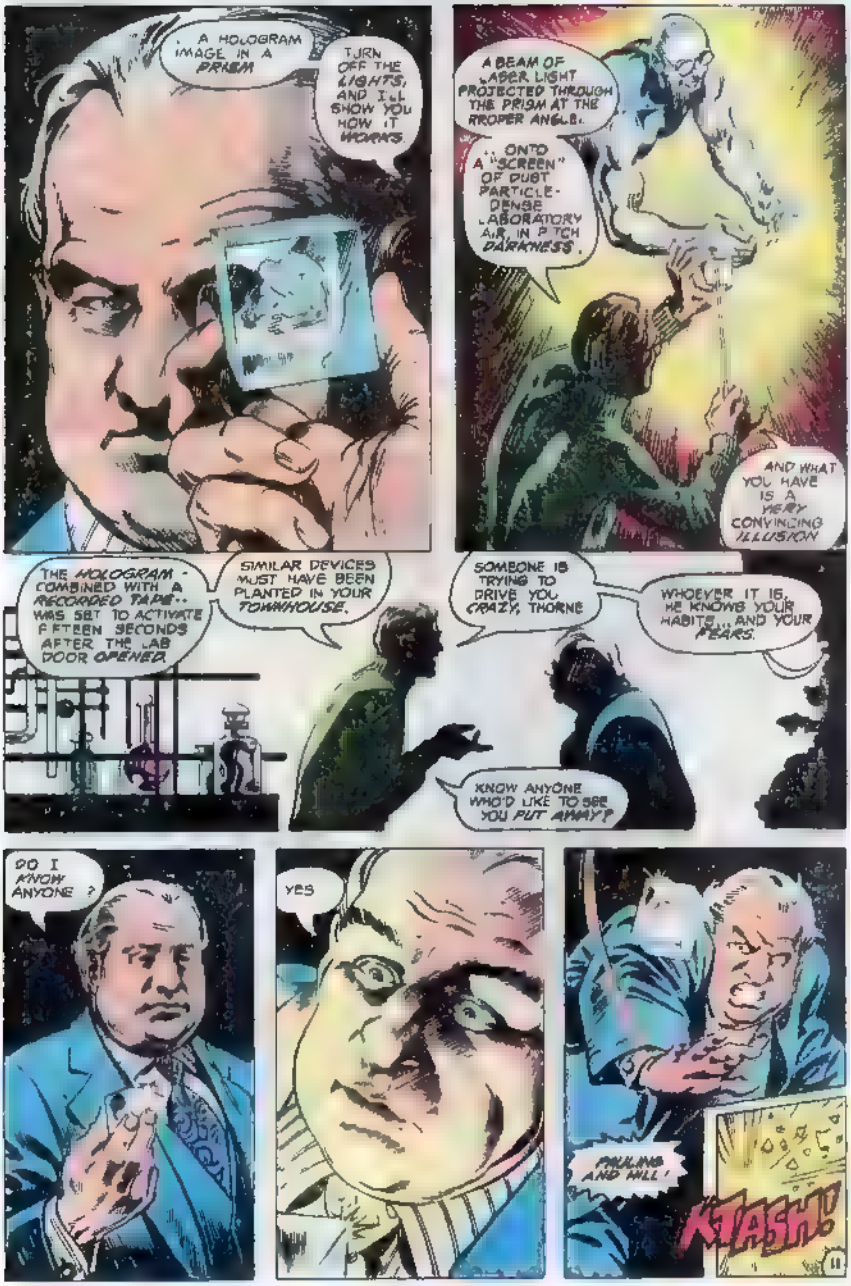
PTOW!
PTOW!
LIKE SHOOTIN' DUCKS IN A GALLERY!
HA HA HA!

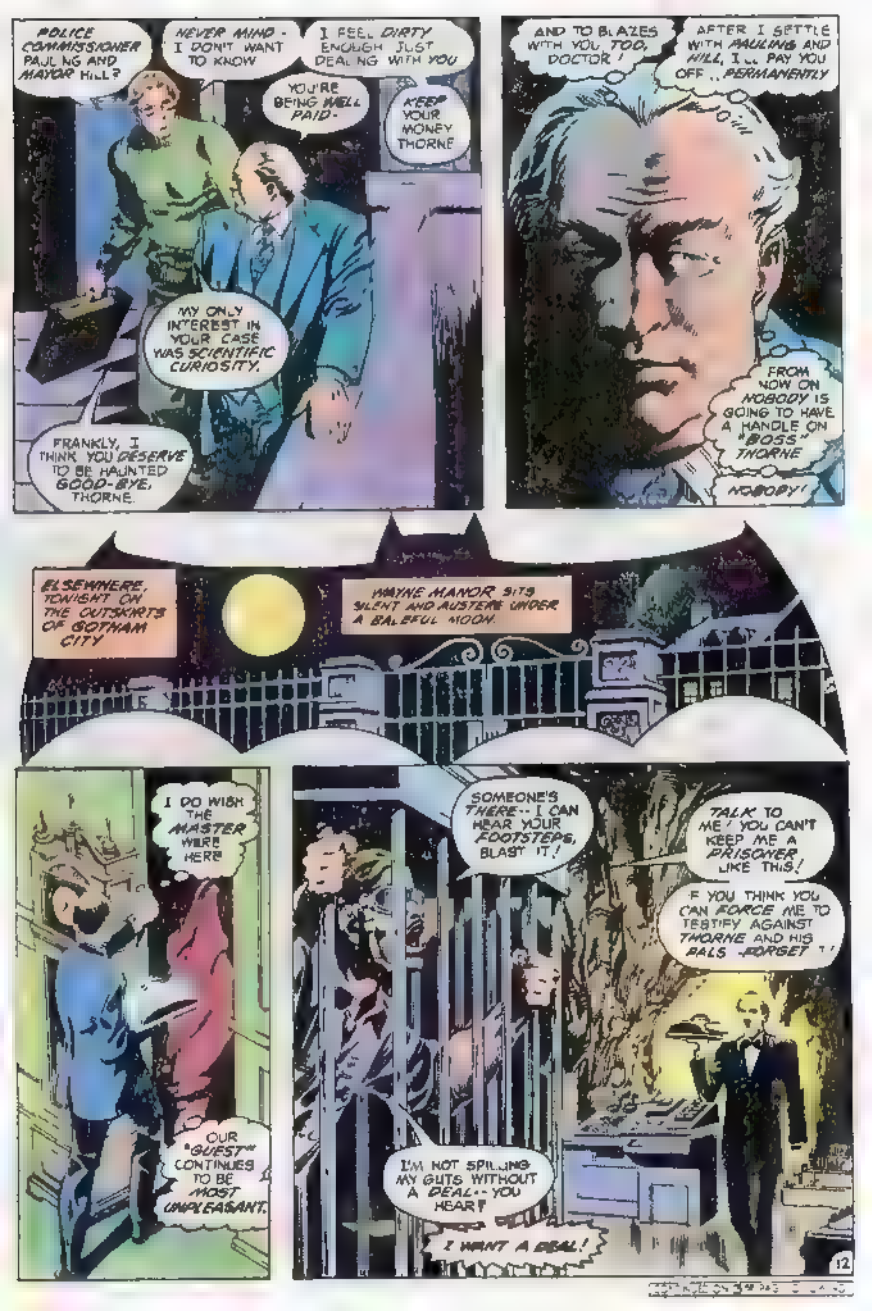
I FEEL LOUSY ABOUT THIS!
THE BATMAN, HE WAS LIKE ONE OF US--
THAT'S ENOUGH, OFFICER.
McCLOSKY, I'LL SEE YOU GET A COMMENDATION FOR TONIGHT'S WORK.
SIR, IT'S A SAFE BET HE FELL INTO THIS ALLEY--
--AND BY THE LOOK OF THINGS, I'D SAY THOSE BOXES MUST HAVE BROKEN HIS FALL.
ONLY QUESTION IS-- WHERE IS HE NOW?
I DON'T GET IT. I PUT A ROUND RIGHT BETWEEN HIS SHOULDER BLADES.
WHAT KIND OF MAN WALKS AWAY FROM THAT?
GREYTOWERS IN THE HEART OF GOTHAM CITY'S "DOCTOR'S ROW" WHERE THE WELL-TO-DO COME SEEKING THE CURE FOR WHAT AILS THEM...
ONCE, MANY MONTHS AGO, GREYTOWERS WAS THE MOST EXCLUSIVE OF GOTHAM'S EXCLUSIVE CLINICS.
THAT WAS BEFORE ITS PROPRIETOR, DR. HUGO STRANGE, MET WITH AN UNFORTUNATE--AND TERMINAL--"ACCIDENT."


SAID ACCIDENT AT THE HANDS OF THIS MAN "BOSS" RUPERT THORNE ONCE AND FUTURE MASTERMIND OF GOTHAM POLITICS
HELLO, THORNE
I SEE YOU'VE GOT MY MESSAGE
MY GOD IS IT--?
OH OR THIRTEEN IT'S YOU
WHEN I SAW YOUR GLASSES, GLITTERING IN THE DARKNESS-
YOU THOUGHT I WAS THE GHOST OF HUGO STRANGE?
I'VE TOLD YOU THORNE THERE'S NO SUCH ANIMAL
YOU SEE THIS? A FALSE FRONT BETWEEN THE STREET AND THE REAL "GREYTOWERS" BUILDING
PROVING THAT "GREYTOWERS" IS NO MORE REAL THAN THE GHOST OF THE MAN YOU MURDERED
I TOLD YOU WHEN I HIRED YOU TO RID ME OF HIS SPIRIT, THIRTEEN - HIS DEATH WAS AN ACCIDENT
RIGHT
AN ACCIDENT--WHILE YOUR THUGS WERE BEATING HIM TO LEARN THE SECRET IDENTITY OF THE BATMAN
A SECRET HUGO STRANGE TOOK WITH HIM TO HIS GRAVE *
BUT WHAT ABOUT BEYOND THE GRAVE THIRTEEN?
SINCE HIS DEATH I HAVEN'T HAD A MOMENT'S PEACE
* DETECTIVE #472--Len
HE'S HAUNTED ME DROVE ME INTO A MADHOUSE...!
THIRTEEN WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
IT'S HUGO STRANGE'S LAB, THORNE
THERE'S SOMETHING HERE I WANT YOU TO SEE
HIS LAB ?
WHO DARES DISTURB MY ETERNAL REST?


WHO DARES DISTURB THE GHOST OF HUGO STRANGE?
IS IT YOU, THORNE?
HAVE YOU FINALLY DECIDED TO JOIN ME IN PERPETUAL DAMNATION?
COME TO ME, THORNE! LET ME EMBRACE YOU!
HAHA
HAH
YAAAHH!
LEAVE ME ALONE!
IT WAS AN ACCIDENT, I TELL YOU! AN ACCIDENT!

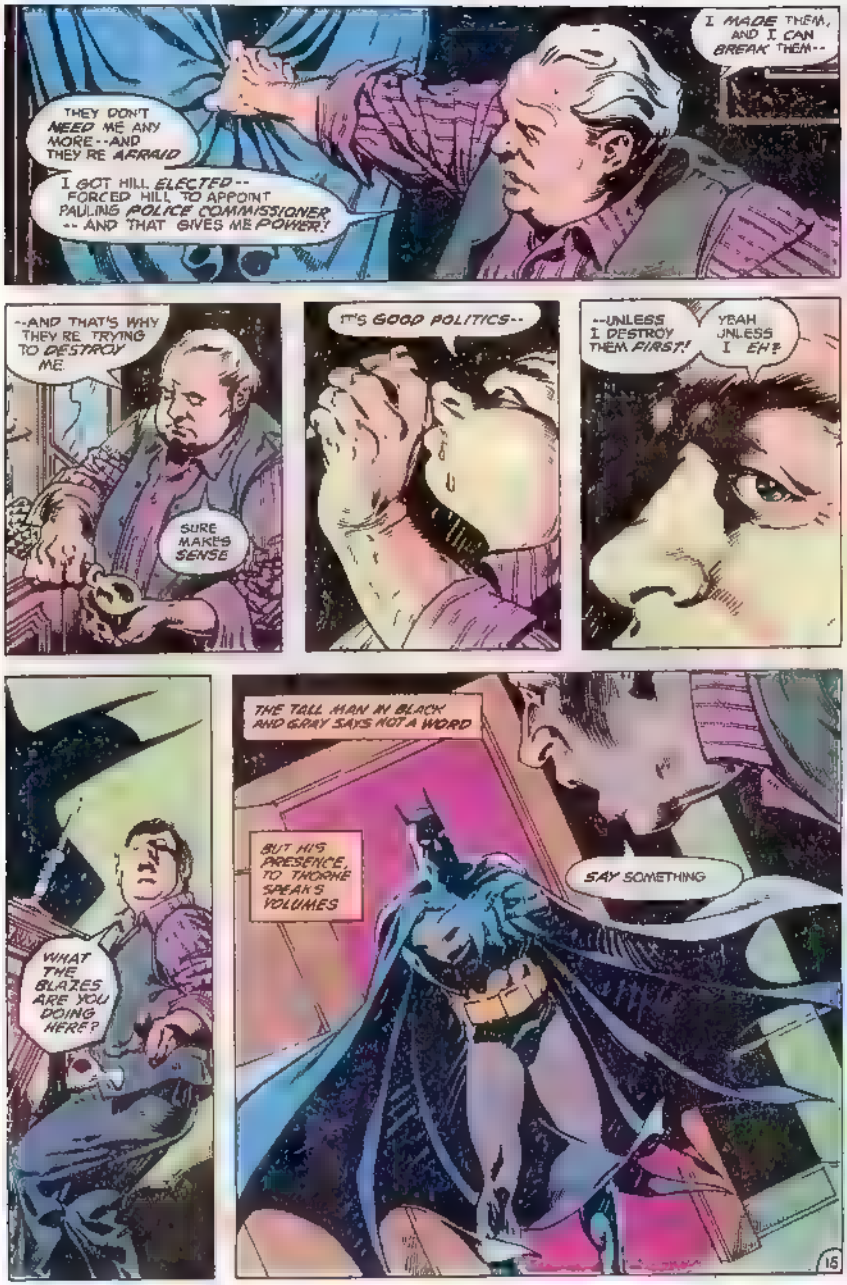
WHO ARE YOU TRYING TO CONVINCE, THORNE?
THE LIGHTS--
THE LIGHTS CAME ON - AND HE DISAPPEARED!
BU-BUT YOU SAW HIM THIRTEEN - YOU MUST HAVE--!
CLIK
THE GHOST - OR YOURSELF?
OH, YES, I SAW HIM THORNE
THEN I'M NOT LOSING MY MIND
HE WAS REALLY HERE-- HUGO STRANGE WAS HERE!
YES - AND NO!
STRANGE'S GENIUS WAS HERE--AND IN THAT SENSE, HE WAS PRESENT IN SPIRIT
BUT, AS FAR AS HIS GHOST GOES
THERE, MR THORNE.
THAT'S THE GHOST OF HUGO STRANGE!
W WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
THAT MACHINE--
IT'S A HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED AND COMPLETELY PORTABLE HOLOGRAM PROJECTOR
FINDING IT WASN'T HARD, SINCE I KNEW WHAT TO LOOK FOR.
HERE'S YOUR "HAUNT" THORNE.


A HOLOGRAM IMAGE IN A PRISM
TURN OFF THE LIGHTS, AND I'LL SHOW YOU HOW IT WORKS.
A BEAM OF LASER LIGHT PROJECTED THROUGH THE PRISM AT THE PROPER ANGLE.
ONTO A "SCREEN" OF DUST PARTICLE-DENSE LABORATORY AIR IN PITCH DARKNESS.
AND WHAT YOU HAVE IS A VERY CONVINCING ILLUSION
THE HOLOGRAM - COMBINED WITH A RECORDED TAPE - WAS SET TO ACTIVATE FIFTEEN SECONDS AFTER THE LAB DOOR OPENED.
SIMILAR DEVICES MUST HAVE BEEN PLANTED IN YOUR TOWNHOUSE.
SOMEONE IS TRYING TO DRIVE YOU CRAZY, THORNE
WHOEVER IT IS, HE KNOWS YOUR HABITS... AND YOUR FEARS.
KNOW ANYONE WHO'D LIKE TO SEE YOU PUT AWAY?
DO I KNOW ANYONE?
YES
FAULING AND HILL!
KTASH!
11


POLICE COMMISSIONER PAULING AND MAYOR HILL?
NEVER MIND - I DON'T WANT TO KNOW
I FEEL DIRTY ENOUGH JUST DEALING WITH YOU
YOU'RE BEING WELL PAID-
KEEP YOUR MONEY THORNE
MY ONLY INTEREST IN YOUR CASE WAS SCIENTIFIC CURIOSITY.
FRANKLY, I THINK YOU DESERVE TO BE HAUNTED GOOD-BYE, THORNE.
AND TO BLAZES WITH YOU, TOO, DOCTOR!
AFTER I SETTLE WITH PAULING AND HILL, I'LL PAY YOU OFF .. PERMANENTLY
FROM NOW ON NOBODY IS GOING TO HAVE A HANDLE ON "BOSS" THORNE
NOBODY!
ELSEWHERE, TONIGHT ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF GOTHAM CITY
WAYNE MANOR SITS SILENT AND AUSTERE UNDER A BALEFUL MOON.
I DO WISH THE MASTER WERE HERE
OUR "GUEST" CONTINUES TO BE MOST UNPLEASANT.
SOMEONE'S THERE -- I CAN HEAR YOUR FOOTSTEPS, BLAST IT!
TALK TO ME! YOU CAN'T KEEP ME A PRISONER LIKE THIS!
IF YOU THINK YOU CAN FORCE ME TO TESTIFY AGAINST THORNE AND HIS PALS -FORGET IT!
I'M NOT SPILLING MY GUTS WITHOUT A DEAL -- YOU HEAR!
I WANT A DEAL!
12

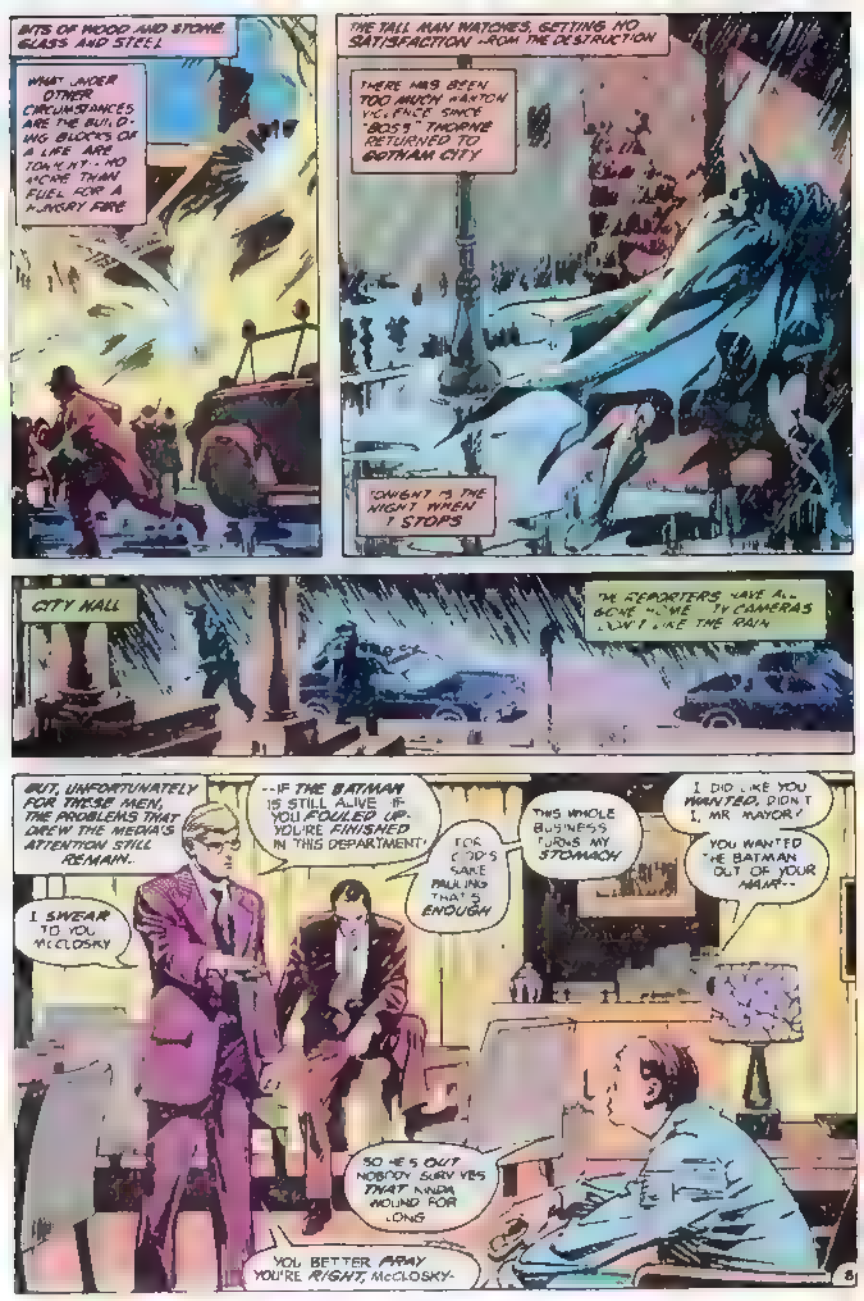
YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
I'M FLOYD LAWTON-- I USED TO BE RICH, AN IMPORTANT MAN!
YOU CAN'T TREAT ME LIKE -
MR. LAWTON, WILL YOU KINDLY SHUT UP?
ALFRED..
I NEED YOU
SIR!
YOU'VE BEEN SHOT...!
SHE'D NEVER BEEN FRIENDS WITH MORTON MONROE
BUT NOW THAT HER LONG-TIME EDITOR IS GONE, DEAD BY HIS OWN HAND, VICKI VALE FEELS AN ABIDING SORROW..
PICTURE YOUR PASSPO
WORLD
WHAT KIND OF WORLD IS IT SHE WONDERS THAT BREAKS SOME MEN WHILE MAKING OTHER MEN RICH AND POWERFUL?
SITTING ALONE IN HER OFFICE AT PICTURE NEWS, LONG AFTER THE WEEK'S PUNISHING DEADLINE HAS PASSED VICKI VALE BROODS ABOUT LIFE AND DEATH
RRING
MY PRIVATE LINE.
13

ONLY ONE PERSON HAS THIS NUMBER-
BRUCE! I'M GLAD YOU CALLED, DARLING I--
THIS IS NOT YOUR "DARLING," MS. VALE.
HE WAS NEVER YOUR "DARLING."
CONSIDER THIS CALL A WARNING
IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE-
STAY AWAY FROM BRUCE WAYNE! CLICK
IN A SMALL WY FOLK ACCESS TOWN A PHONE IS SET DOWN BY A TREMBLING HAND
AND WHETHER THAT HAND SNAKES WITH RAGE OR FEAR, NOT EVEN ITS OWNER COULD SAY FOR CERTAIN
AS FOR MONY VALE WHAT SHE FEELS IS COLD FURY
IT'S TIME SHE HAD A TALK WITH MR BRUCE WAYNE
BUT THAT IS FOR ANOTHER TIME ANOTHER PLACE!
THIS TIME AND THIS PLACE: AFTER MIDNIGHT AT THE TOWNHOUSE HOME OF BOSS" RUPERT THORNE
"IN DETECTIVE #520, TO BE EXACT. --LEN
SO WILL AND PAULINE HAVE TURNED AGAINST ME
I SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED IT..
IF THE SITUATION IS REVERSED, I WOULD'VE TURNED AGAINST THEM!
14


I MADE THEM, AND I CAN BREAK THEM--
THEY DON'T NEED ME ANY MORE--AND THEY'RE AFRAID
I GOT HILL ELECTED-- FORCED HILL TO APPOINT PAULING POLICE COMMISSIONER -- AND THAT GIVES ME POWER!
--AND THAT'S WHY THEY'RE TRYING TO DESTROY ME.
SURE MAKES SENSE
IT'S GOOD POLITICS--
--UNLESS I DESTROY THEM FIRST!
YEAH UNLESS I EH?
WHAT THE BLAZES ARE YOU DOING HERE?
THE TALL MAN IN BLACK AND GRAY SAYS NOT A WORD
BUT HIS PRESENCE, TO THORNE SPEAKS VOLUMES
SAY SOMETHING

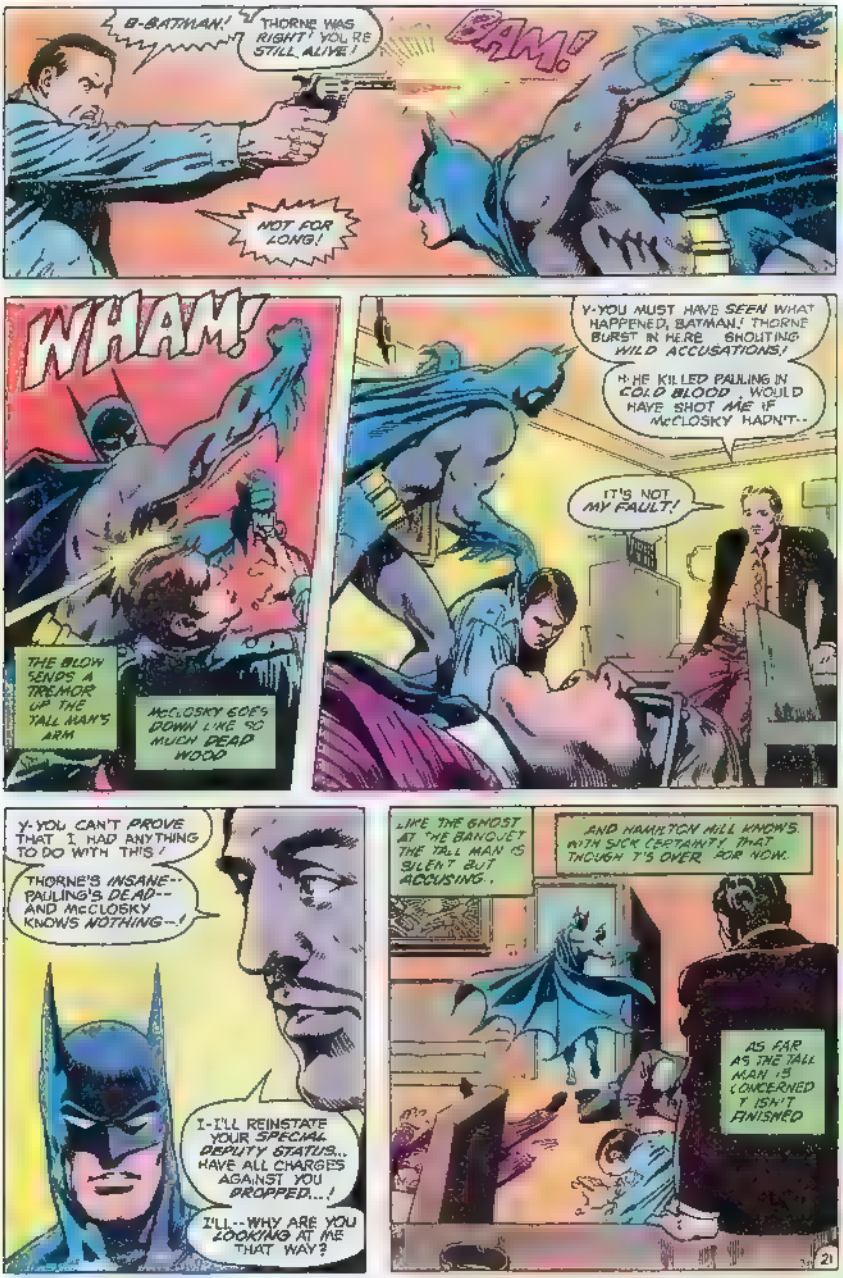
YOU KNOW, DON'T YOU?
ABOUT HOW I RIGGED THE MAYORAL ELECTION SLIPPED ARTHUR REEVES THOSE PHONY PHOTOS OF YOU SO HE'D RUIN HIMSELF WHEN HE BROUGHT THEM TO THE MEDIA.!
YOU KNOW EVERYTHING!
A TINKLE OF BROKEN GLASS ON FIREPLACE MARBLE.
THE SHARP SOUND GOES UNNOTICED
IN THE TALL MAN'S DEAFENING SILENCE
SO YOU KNOW SO WHAT?
YOU CAN'T PROVE A THING
REEVES WILL NEVER TESTIFY-- AND THERE'S NOBODY ELSE WHO--
WAITASECOND LAWTON!
YOU GOT TO LAWTON-- DEADSHOT DIDN'T YOU?
HE MUST'VE TOLD YOU HIRING HIM TO KILL WAYNE WAS MY IDEA!
MILL AND PAULINS-- THEY SET ME UP TO SAVE THEIR OWN NECKS!
DIDN'T THEY?

I'M GOING TO NAIL THOSE ROTTEN-
WHAT?
A SPARK FROM A FORGOTTEN FIRE
SPILLED BRANDY
..AND FATE: TOGETHER THEY CREATE DISASTER
YAAAAAAH
THE TALL MAN MOVES QUICKLY.
BUT THE FIRE IS ALREADY SPREADING OUT OF CONTROL
PERSIAN RUGS AND DRY ANTIQUES MAKE GOOD TINDER YOU SEE.
AND SO, LIKE HIS DREAMS OF POLITICAL GLORY..
RUDDY THORNE'S HOME GOES UP IN SMOKE!
BY THE TIME THE TALL MAN GIVES THE BATTLE UP FOR LOST..
"BOSS" THORNE HAS VANISHED INTO THE NIGHT
7


BITS OF WOOD AND STONE, GLASS AND STEEL
WHAT UNDER OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES ARE THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A LIFE ARE TONIGHT - NO MORE THAN FUEL FOR A HUNGRY FIRE
THE TALL MAN WATCHES, GETTING NO SATISFACTION FROM THE DESTRUCTION
THERE HAS BEEN TOO MUCH WANTON VIOLENCE SINCE "BOSS" THORNE RETURNED TO GOTHAM CITY
TONIGHT IS THE NIGHT WHEN IT STOPS
CITY HALL
THE REPORTERS HAVE ALL GONE HOME - TV CAMERAS LOVE LIKE THE RAIN
BUT, UNFORTUNATELY FOR THESE MEN, THE PROBLEMS THAT DREW THE MEDIA'S ATTENTION STILL REMAIN.
--IF THE BATMAN IS STILL ALIVE IF YOU FOULED UP- YOU'RE FINISHED IN THIS DEPARTMENT.
I SWEAR TO YOU McCLOSKY
FOR GOD'S SAKE PAULIND THAT'S ENOUGH
THIS WHOLE BUSINESS TURNS MY STOMACH
I DID LIKE YOU WANTED, DIDN'T I, MR MAYOR?
YOU WANTED THE BATMAN OUT OF YOUR HAAR--
SO HE'S OUT NOBODY SURVIVES THAT KINDA WOUND FOR LONG
YOU BETTER PRAY YOU'RE RIGHT, McCLOSKY-
8

HE'S WRONG
THE BATMAN'S ALIVE UNHURT
HE CAME TO MY HOUSE--TOLD ME THINGS
-AND SUDDENLY ALL THE PIECES FIT
FOR MONTHS, I THOUGHT I WAS GOING CRAZY
I SAW GHOSTS - A MAN WHO SHOULD HAVE BEEN DEAD-- A MAN I WATCHED DIE!
AND IT WAS ALL A TRICK - TO DRIVE ME INSANE -!
YOUR TRICK YOU ROTTEN SCUM!
THORNE. FOR THE LOVE OF MERCY, I SWEAR I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!
THAT'S TOO BAD FOR YOU, HILL
A MAN SHOULD ALWAYS KNOW WHY HE'S GOING TO DIE!
THORNE PLEASE
DON'T
19

THERE IS, IN THE MIND OF EACH MAN A SUDDEN UNNATURAL CLARITY AS IF TIME HAD SOMEHOW EXPANDED AND REALITY SHIFTED IN TO HIGH GEAR
IN THAT INSTANT DREAMS AND REGRETS, FEARS AND HOPES CEASE TO HAVE MEANING, IN THE DOUBLE THUNDER OF TWO GUNS FIRING
AND FOR EACH THERE IS THE SIMULTANEOUS REALIZATION THAT IT'S GIVEN ALL OF IT OVER!
BAM!
KBAM!
CRIPES
I CAN'T
UNGH!!!
10


B-BATMAN!
THORNE WAS RIGHT! YOU'RE STILL ALIVE!
BAM!
NOT FOR LONG!
WHAM!
THE BLOW SENDS A TREMOR UP THE TALL MAN'S ARM
McCLOSKY GOES DOWN LIKE SO MUCH DEAD WOOD
Y-YOU MUST HAVE SEEN WHAT HAPPENED, BATMAN! THORNE BURST IN HERE SHOUTING WILD ACCUSATIONS!
H-HE KILLED PAULING IN COLD BLOOD. WOULD HAVE SHOT ME IF McCLOSKY HADN'T..
IT'S NOT MY FAULT!
Y-YOU CAN'T PROVE THAT I HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THIS!
THORNE'S INSANE--PAULING'S DEAD--AND McCLOSKY KNOWS NOTHING--!
I-I'LL REINSTATE YOUR SPECIAL DEPUTY STATUS... HAVE ALL CHARGES AGAINST YOU DROPPED...!
I'LL--WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME THAT WAY?
LIKE THE GHOST AT THE BANQUET THE TALL MAN IS SILENT BUT ACCUSING.
AND HAMILTON MILL KNOWS, WITH SICK CERTAINTY, THAT THOUGH IT'S OVER FOR NOW.
AS FAR AS THE TALL MAN IS CONCERNED IT ISN'T FINISHED
21

EPILOGUE:
THE RAIN HAS STOPPED, AND THE SKIES OVER GOTHAM ARE CLEARING...
...BUT DAWN IS STILL AN HOUR AWAY
YOU HEARD ALL OF THAT, ALFRED?
I KEPT A COM-LINK CHANNEL TO THE BATCAVE OPEN, HOPING THAT THOSE CREEPS WOULD INCRIMINATE THEMSELVES--
...BUT I DOUBT ANYTHING THEY SAID WOULD BE VERY CONVINCING IN COURT.
HOW'S THE PATIENT?
DID I MAKE A GOOD STAND-IN FOR THE BATMAN, BRUCE?
...IN THE BATCAVE UNDER WAYNE MANOR, BRUCE WAYNE SMILES THROUGH A FOG OF PAIN AND ANTIBIOTICS...
YOU WERE GREAT, ROBIN.
AND DON'T BE TOO SURE ABOUT INCRIMINATION--
"BOSS" THORNE, AT LEAST, WON'T SEE THE OUTSIDE OF A PRISON WALL FOR MANY A YEAR -- BECAUSE OF PAULING, AND BECAUSE OF HIS CONFESSION CONCERNING DEADSHOT.
HAMILTON HILL IS ANOTHER MATTER, I'M AFRAID, UNLESS THORNE OR DEADSHOT TESTIFIES--
--HILL IS SCOTT FREE!

DAMN.
TWO CROOKS NAILED OUT OF THREE ISN'T BAD-- BUT IT ALSO ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH!
WE'LL JUST HAVE TO KEEP TRYING.
ONE THING PUZZLES ME THOUGH--ALL THAT BABBLING THORNE DID ABOUT GHOSTS...
HILL AND PAULING DIDN'T SEEM TO KNOW WHAT HE WAS TALKING ABOUT, AND NEITHER DO I...
"...I GUESS THORNE WAS SIMPLY OUT OF HIS MIND!"
AT THE CURB ACROSS FROM CITY HALL, A BLACK LIMOUSINE SITS PARKED, MOTOR PURRING, THE SAME LIMOUSINE WHICH EARLIER PARKED OPPOSITE THE TOWN-HOUSE OF RUPERT THORNE...
SLOWLY NOW AS THE AMBULANCE BEARING THORNE'S WOUNDED BODY PULLS AWAY INTO THE NIGHT, THE REAR WINDOW SLIDES DOWNWARD...
...AND FROM WITHIN THE CAR'S SHADOWED INTERIOR COMES A SOFT CHUCKLE.
GOOD NIGHT, THORNE.
PLEASANT DREAMS!
HAHAHAHAH
TO BE CONTINUED!
BUT FIRST, IN DETECTIVE 521:
CATWOMAN!
ON SALE SEPT 23RD

Dear Sirs:

Not too long ago, I bought a stack of back issues of BATMAN from about a year ago, and after reading them over, and reading my monthly issues, a couple of things have come to mind I thought I might write about.

A number of readers have expressed their delight at seeing the Batman, the Dark Knight Detective, return to the pages of the book. I'd like to add my voice to that chorus. For too long, the Batman has been more of a social gadfly than a detective; he was almost more of a playboy than Bruce Wayne was supposed to be. Fortunately, though, in recent issues he has re-emerged as a detective, a figure to be feared, a darker, grittier, more complex and believable character. This can only be for the better. The Batman is a character that requires a bit of "willing suspension of disbelief" in the first place; this is a lot easier to do when he's a three-dimensional, believable character. Thus, I'm also glad to see that villains like the Joker and his ilk have vanished from the pages of the book. I hope this is permanent. I've long thought that the Joker and Co. were just "Saturday morning cartoon" for a book like BATMAN. The Batman himself is plenty fantastic for the book; the addition of ludicrous characters like the Joker and Co. turns it into a lifeless comedy that effectively blunts any suspense or mystery. The Batman is a larger than life figure, the Joker and Co. are parodies of life. Yes, the Batman should have an arch-enemy, in my opinion, but it should be a character who is similarly larger-than-life, similarly believable, rather than a cardboard caperer/clown. After all, James Bond has his Ernst Stavro Blofeld, Robin Hood has his Sheriff of Nottingham, Simon Templar has his Claude Eustace Teal; the Batman needs a worthy adversary. I'd give my vote to Ra's Al Ghul. What could be larger-than-life than an immortal? Ah, yes, here is a man worthy of the Batman's attention. The stock, stereotyped thugs with their "dat-dat-dese-dose" speech are seldom any sort of match for the Batman. Any minimally effective police department should be able to clean those types up before lunch, and the Batman should be able to do it in his sleep. A figure like the Batman cries out for a figure like Ra's Al Ghul to spar with. I certainly hope he'll be appearing more regularly. "The Lessing Affair" was one of the most exciting pieces of fiction I've read in a long, long time.

Complaints aside, though, I'll keep reading and enjoying every month. The artwork varies wildly in quality from issue to issue, but the character of the Batman is strong enough and is being treated intelligently enough that he effectively transcends any variation in artwork. One of my favorite bits is the way he goes about his business directly, decisively... and silently. An awe-inspiring character indeed.

So, I thank you for many hours of reading pleasure.

Sincerely,
J. Owen Renner
40 S. Shaddle St., Apt. 209
Mundelein, IL 60060

Thanks for your incisive and detailed comments about the Batman, Owen. We always welcome letters that delve into any of our characters' personalities. And speaking about personalities, the Joker happens to be the most popular of the Dark Knight Detective's villains. Yes, Owen, we hate to break the news to you, but the majority of our readers love the Joker. Ra's Al Ghul comes in as a close second. And as you may have noticed in B&B #191 and Batman #353, the Harlequin of Hate has hardly vanished from the Batman books. The Joker is a very complex character and perhaps you've been misinterpreting his personality all this time. Sure, the Joker speaks flamboyantly and is constantly performing outlandish crimes, but you wouldn't want to meet him in a dark alley, let alone a well-lit room, for that matter. He's literally a lunatic: a full blown crazy person, the ultimate madman. Disagree with the Crown Prince of Crime and you die. He's been known to knock off his henchmen at the drop of a hat and for no apparent reason. That surely doesn't sound like "Saturday Morning TV" behavior to us.

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Dear Editor and other Bat-Maniacs,

Re: Batman #349.

So, it's finally revealed who Dala is. And who would believe it? The same Dala who, teamed up with her partner the Monk, was the third Batman villain to make an appearance, way back in Detective numbers 31 and 32. (Not that I'm old enough to remember that, but I read Michael L. Fleisher's Encyclopedia of Comic Book Heroes, Volume 1: The Batman.)

It wasn't hard to figure out after the issue's revelation, but before this, the reader (as well as The Batman) had no idea. Considering that they were killed is one of the major reasons they weren't discovered. Hopefully these won't be revealed as Earth-one "copies" of Earth-two villains, but will be the same ones The Batman fought (without Robin) the first time 'round.

On to the story. The Batman appears for only two pages. That was one of the major reasons I liked it. Not that I don't like The Batman, but a change of pace like this is great!

Robin: A full story devoted to him?! (or is it?)? I never get that straight!—That's fantastic! Once in a while it's a really great thing. I liked that for the same reason I liked the lack of The Batman.

Ex-Commissioner Gordon and Jason Bard: Leave his beard, give them their own book, and I will be very, very happy. The Bard-Gordon Detective Agency could at least be a back-up feature, and would (I'm sure) snap Gordon out of his self-made misery.

Alfred-Human Target team: Another wonderful duo. Conway seems to have a knack for subplots, and I hope they don't get in each other's way as they resolve themselves.

Catwoman: Doesn't see much hope for her, due to her own guilt. She is so sorry of when she has done while trying to help. I doubt she can last much longer as a heroine despite what the letters page says.

Well, hopefully the next issue (#350) will be something super-special, but it will be hard to beat this one. Good luck.

Saul Rosenkoff
68 Forshay Road
Monsey, N.Y. 10952

There's more than enough hope for Catwoman, Saul. Stay tuned for the next issue of Batman where interesting and unexpected things will develop between you-know-who and you-know-who.

* * * * *

Dear Dick:

Doing my weekly comic shopping, I saw the splash cover of Batman #349. Quickly I bought it, ran home and read it. Results: WONDERFUL, EXCELLENT, AND BEAUTIFUL! I can't wait till next issue.

Also I would like to personally thank you for making DC the very best in comics.

When I first started collecting comics, the competition was number one with me. Now it can't compare with you guys. You all have so many great new titles (All-Star Squadron, Arak, Firestorm, & Swamp Thing).

You guys are certainly making a new DC Explosion happen. Last but not least, thanks for not having the snuck-up attitude of Your Friendly Neighborhood Competition.

You guys are the original and the best in comics. Make Mine Dynamic DC.

Peter Guiverre
P.O. Box 182
Jackson, La. 70748

Thank you, Peter, and everyone else out there, for helping us make the new DC explosion happen. The excitement's only beginning and we couldn't be doing it without you. Until next month...

DCP

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then you should give it a try.